LD 38; Psalm 147:1-11; Rom. 11:33-12:2; 4th Commandment- Concerning Worship I. What is Worship II. What Happens in Worship III. When Should We Worship

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the common mentality in our world today is that Sunday is a day for family- or a day for our hobbies and pastimes. Sunday is the day we mow our lawns and watch the big game. But are we called to something more- some deeper and more pressing use to this chief among the days? In our study of the 10 Commandments, we have seen that first table of the Law reveals who we are to worship and how we are to worship. His Name has been revealed by which we can know God and His character. Today we see that God has given us one day- a special day set apart for worship. So today we come to LD 38 dealing with the 4th commandment- you shall keep the sabbath day holy. Here we find that this commandment starts in the positive- up to this point we have been told what not to do. Do not misuse God’s name- do not have other gods- do not make images of God. But today we see a positive- you shall do something! You shall come and worship! So this evening we consider this theme: Jesus Christ reveals the proper use of the Lord’s Day as the fulfillment of the Sabbath.

**I. What is Worship**

In our first point, we will consider what worship is. The word- worship- means that something has worth or value. To worship is to acknowledge that something has dignity, weight and honor. Something has great importance. The Greek word for worship is “proskuneo” meaning to approach God to praise. To prostrate yourself- to bow in the presence of God who is holy. When we sing “hallelujah” we are singing- praise to Yahweh- praise the Lord. And to sing a doxology- is the glorify God with praise. So there are many different words that we use to describe this work- but basically worship is giving God the glory that He deserves. The definition of worship is a proper and awe filled response to the saving act and character of God. When we praise God we are responding to what God is and what He has done. Our praise is simply acknowledging what is true- and it is giving God the glory He deserves. Earlier we read from Psalm 147:1- it is good to sing praise to God- for it is pleasant and a song of praise is fitting. It is good, pleasant and fitting! It pleases God to hear His glory told- and it pleases us His people to make know about God what is true! Praise is fitting- good and expected! It is the right and necessary response of those who see God rightly to desire that His name would be praised! Or as Psalm 29:2 puts it, ascribe to the LORD that glory due His name! Worshipping God is to give God what He deserves- his rightful due! Paying Him what He deserves. And again from Psalm 95:6- Oh come, let us worship and bow down, for He is our God and we are the people of His pasture. In worship we acknowledge what is true about God- and worship is the fitting response of His creatures. We are at our best when we are worshipping God- because we find our place and give Him the glory He deserves. Worship makes God great and man small- or rather worship acknowledges that God is great and that we are small. For we cannot make God any greater- He is already beyond all tracing and His majesty cannot be contained! Our worship seeks to put to words what is true- Our God is an awesome God- glorious in majesty and great in power! Let all the earth know and declare this truth! Our God is a holy and awe-inspiring God! He is worthy of all our worship, adoration and praise!

**II. What Happens in Worship**

Now that we have heard the call to worship- and we know that our God is worthy of all the worship we can give Him, in our second point we will consider what takes place in the worship service. Specifically, what goes on during the corporate service where God’s people are gathered together? As you will remember, we begin every worship service with a call to worship. Usually reading from a psalm, we are called, invited and directed to come. Although it reads like an invite, for God’s people it is also a requirement. We will want to come- and we know that we must! When the good shepherd calls, His sheep hear his voice and assemble. We refuse to forsake or neglect the gathering of the assembly of God’s people as Heb. 10 puts it. So we come together when we are called. To do what, exactly? Well, our QA 103 says to learn what God’s word teaches, to participate in the sacraments, to pray publicly and the bring Christian offerings for the poor. All this is what we do- what we are called to bring to worship. Worship is rightly called work- not that we earn or merit anything by that work- but it does take preparation and dedication! We give ourselves. We need to get our hearts ready before we come- and seek to keep our hearts engaged when we are here! One of the main sins we need to watch out for is simply doing worship because it is our routine. We go through the motions without any desire or emotion- we are cold and calculating in our praise of God. We should seek to be moved in our joyful works of praise- to avoid dead formalism or hypocrisy in our worship. As our God warns in Isaiah 29:13- these people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Proper fear, reverence and awe of God cannot be taught by men- Isaiah says- it must come from a heart changed by the Spirit. That is why prayer is such an important part of worship! We need to ask God to give us His Spirit so that we might praise God rightly- in Spirit and in Truth! To be the kind of worshippers God seeks! And that brings me to another aspect of worship. Not only is worship the place we do something- it is also the place where God is at work! As QA 103 says- we are to let God work in us through His Spirit! Worship is both our response to God and also the place that God promises to work in us! The means of grace are given to the church- and it is here that God works- bring His grace to bear! Look again at what Psalm 147 says about the work of our God! As Psalm 147:2 begins- the Lord builds up Jerusalem. He gathers the outcasts, heals the broken hearted, binds their wounds. Lifts up the humble. Sometimes we forget that God is not only present here- but that He is active! He is working- to gather, build, protect, heal and lift up! Corporate worship is where the master physician does His work! Spiritual surgery takes place every week! It is here that the good shepherd’s voice calls and gathers sheep- bringing in the outcast! It is here that our cold hearts are awakened- sins exposed- the flame of love fanned. God is here and He is working! Sometimes we have a low expectation of our worship services. We don’t think anything will happen and nothing will change. But God is the active agent in worship- He is using the means of grace- piercing and pricking us when we stray. Binding our wounds and comforting those oppressed. Building up the walls of defense. Nurturing the little lambs so that they grow in grace and knowledge. All of this God is doing in the worship service! That is why we should be glad to come! Not only because we are willing to give God the glory He deserves- but because we have an eager anticipation for what God will give us in worship!

**III. When Should We Worship**

When we read this commandment in the Law, it speaks to the need to keep the Sabbath day holy. So in our third point, we consider the “when” question of worship. The Sabbath day was the last day of the week- which was to be remembered and celebrated. Kept holy- meaning that it was set apart as special. But what were the Israelites supposed to celebrate? What were they to remember? Well, in Ex. 20 they were to remember that the Lord made heaven and earth in six days, and He rested on the seventh. Therefore God blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. So this commandment is dealing with creation and rest. The Israelites are to rejoice in the creation by resting- ceasing from labor and toil to remember that they are God’s creatures who were made for worship. In the second giving of the Law found in Dt. 5; this commandment is rooted deliverance. Remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there and delivered you safe to the promised land of rest. So the Sabbath Day was a day to remember and celebrate redemption. So this commandment is rooted in both creation and redemption- and as a day of remembrance God’s people are to acknowledge and celebrate what God has done for them. As we move into the New Covenant, we find that Jesus perfectly fulfilled this Sabbath rest by resting in the grave on Saturday. He ushered in a new era when He rose again on the first day of the week. Our sabbath rest is now celebrated on the Lord’s Day- with both the resurrection and Pentecost taking place on the first day of the week. We also find the earthly church gathered for worship on the Lord’s Day- where they would gather to hear the preaching, participate in the sacraments and gather their offerings. (Read Acts 20:7) John was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day in Rev. 1 when he received his vision as well. But the focus of this commandment remains- keep the sabbath day holy- remember and set aside a day for worship! This commandment reminds us who we are and where we are going. We were made for more than work- we were made for worship! We are to enjoy this sacred rest from our sinful labor as we look forward to being brought into our eternal home- the heavenly land of rest. That is why QA 103 says- especially on the festive day of rest, I will diligently attend the assembly of God’s people. So our God has given us a special day to remember, celebrate and worship Him and His works. The cycle of working 6 and resting 1 remains. But instead of working first and then resting, we now enjoy rest and go out to work having been refreshed. What we do the rest of the week flows from what we do on Sunday. Have you ever been at a bonfire- and then later smelled your cloths? The smell of smoke remains, right? In a similar way, we take the smell of Sunday with us through the week. We take the fragrance of Christ with us- Sunday’s worship follows us all week long. So if we rightly understand what worship is teaching us, we will carry its truth with us the rest of the week. You are a holy people- and all of your life is to be holy. So as we read in Rom. 12, offer your body as a living sacrifice to God- this your true and proper worship. As QA 103 affirms, that every day of my life I am to rest from your evil ways and let the Lord work in me through His Spirit. In this way I begin my eternal sabbath in this life! The worship we do today helps us prepare for tomorrow- to be sanctified more and more as we look forward to our eternal rest in glory. In this way, as we rest from our sin and worship God in Spirit and truth, we can begin our eternal sabbath rest today! So although all of life is part of our worship, our God gives us a special day to focus on being true worshippers.

To conclude, Sundays are sometimes described as boring to those who do no understand what worship is. Sunday should be a festive day of praise- like the rehearsal for our upcoming wedding day! Most brides are excited for the rehearsal- because the rehearsal brings us one step closer to the wedding! So it is, Sunday is a foretaste and even beginning of our eternal sabbath rest. Jesus Christ reveals the proper use of the Lord’s Day as the fulfillment of the Sabbath. So may we all learn to view and use this day as God designed- a day when we are fed and He is glorified!